Non-Profit Essentials:

* a vital mission
* high-quality, responsive, and unduplicated programs and services
* reliable and diverse revenue streams
* clear lines of accountability
* adequate facilities

Steps to Formalize your organization:

1. File articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State or other appropriate state agency
   1. <http://www.irs.gov/charities/charitable/article/0,,id=129298,00.html>
2. Apply for exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Please note that it can take 3-12 months for the IRS to return its decision. [Get the IRS’s application instructions >>](http://www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96109,00.html)
3. Register with the state(s) where you plan to do fundraising activities
   1. <http://www.nasconet.org/documents/u-s-charity-offices/#PA>

Non-Profit Lifecycles:

* Idea stage
* Start-up stage
* Growth stage
* Mature stage